

MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT, FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 1914.

We published last week a chapter on "Ellen's Mountain". This week we publish the first chapter of "Ellen or Whisperings of an Old Pine."

In our first recollections of "Ellen's Mountain," it was called "Potato Hill". This was years ago when we were quite young. We remember at that time the mountain was ascended by our father, Philip Battell, who took much interest in this ascent, and frequently referred to it.

In later years we ascended it, having returned from Europe, where we traveled afoot over the different mountains of Europe, including the Alps and Pyrenees, as also the various highest mountains of Great Britain. We also became enamored with the beautiful "Ellen's Isle," in Scotland, which afterwards suggested the name "Ellen's Mountain," for Potato Hill, and has resulted in the publishing of "Ellen or Whisperings of an Old Pine," in three Volumes, and these Volumes have been given almost entirely to a discussion of the nature of Sound and Light, a discussion which has thrown wide open the doors of Physics, and demonstrated beyond question that both Sound and Light are corpuscular, composed of infinitesimal particles of matter. This is now accepted by all leading minds, and is spreading rapidly throughout the world.



ELLEN.

ELLEN

OR

WHISPERINGS OF AN OLD PINE.

I.

HOW did I get up here on this high mountain, do you ask?

I was born here. My ancestors were here before me. It is our home, this mountain-top. They came here from the valley below, I suppose,—at least the greater part of our family have always dwelt in the valleys. But those that came upon the mountains found the soil deep and strong, and thrived on it, and I grew up with the rest of them, only a little nearer to these rocks. And as the years went by I have become stronger and taller, until now I am the largest of all the pines upon this mountain. And thus I stand up here winter and summer, my heavy branches covered the year round with myriads of green leaves, keeping watch, not only over the mountains, but over the valleys which lie at either side of me; the great wide valley to the west, and the smaller valleys at the east, that cluster among our hills and make this country so beautiful.

Other mountains are visible from here besides the range I am on. The highest but farthest away are at the northeast. Those at my west are the nearest, and very distinctly to the southwest, if the day is clear, a third group can be distinguished. These last, I hear, have become quite renowned, from a tale that is told of one Rip Van Winkle, who fell asleep upon them and did not awake until twenty years had passed away, and then could hardly recognize the scenes and the people about him. The old Pine has lived many twenty years, and in that time seen many changes, but these have all come so gradually that few, if any, astonished me. I have seen the valleys themselves change, from a wilderness to the homes that now adorn them; but to me it did not make much difference. It pained my heart, to be sure, to see the great pines disappear, as most of them have; but death and decay always come, and what we cannot prevent we soon learn to accept. And now I have become interested in the farms and villages that appear where formerly grew great forests of pines.

You see the lake that glistens at my west, how like a thread it starts far to the south, and how beautifully it widens at its northern end, where many islands, some extending long distances and covered with farms and villages, grace its waters. It is the mirror of our mountains, and it is, too, the mirror of those mountains that lie beyond it, at many points piercing the sky. Upon this lake formerly there passed only the Indian canoe; later the batteaux of the French, who entered it from

Canada; then, as commerce increased, the white-sailed sloops and schooners, followed by the steamboat. This last for many years, trim and elegant, has sailed over these waters, the smoke curling above it by day, while at night its glittering lights send their rays far upon our mountain-tops. You may not see, but the old Pine knows that this lake is connected with the great river that flows from that wonderful system of lakes which penetrate the American continent, pouring its volume of dark-blue waters far into the north, until they enter the ocean.

Greater changes have come upon the land. At first, stages passed below. Then the railroad was built, that you can see continuing in such straight lines, and soon upon it appeared the engine with smoke rising as from the steamboat, and drawing a train of cars. The old Pine has noticed, too, though I cannot see very distinctly, that another railroad has been built along the lake on its western shore.

To all these changes the old Pine has become accustomed.

There is not now nearly so much travel upon the lake as before the railroads were built. The cars make better time than the boats; and the trains glide on through the winter, while the lake is a frozen plain of snow.

To the east I have seen similar changes occur, though I cannot mark so perfectly their course. For here the view is much obstructed by hills and mountains.

Of the distant mountain ranges the old Pine knows but little. I do not often concern myself with what is going on beyond my immediate vicinity. This may not have been always so, but in late years I have become so much interested in the valley directly to my east, that I give but little attention to the rest of the world. There is nothing in this valley itself so very remarkable, although it is an exceedingly pretty one, as are many others that I look down upon. But in it rests a home that centres the affection of all who are acquainted with its



ELLEN'S MOUNTAIN, WINTER.

inmates. You can see it now as it shows on the lower hills which help to form the valley. Even from here you may notice that it is more handsomely adorned with trees and plants and more tidily kept than the other homes that we can see.

Twenty-three years ago a gentleman came to town and purchased the farm where this home is. It was said that he had traveled considerably abroad, and had some reputation as an author. Shortly after this purchase he married the daughter of a neighboring clergyman, and, with his wife, moved upon the farm, that from its location was always an unusually attractive one. Two years later the cottage was built, where the three sisters were born who have brought to this valley so much of happiness and delight.

When the first child began to play upon the lawn, it came from the elm that stands beyond the house that her name was ELLEN. Three years more and a second child was old enough to walk, not so winsome and agile as the first, but all the flowers and the grasses of the valley agreed that she was very beautiful.

In the meantime Ellen wandered in the fields, and long distances down the road. The old Pine saw her and loved. For I noticed how true her step was, and I noticed the thousand acts of kindness that she showed to tree or brook or stone or flower. She moved with the power of love, always considering the wants and happiness of others, and, as a necessary sequence,—for nature is full of surprises, and makes no omissions in the distribution of her rewards,—everything loved Ellen.

And so Ellen grew, each day adding to her graces and her good report. Then the word was spread over valley and mountain that Ellen had another sister. A few months after, death first entered the cottage, gathering to his fold the husband and father. Thus came sorrow and mourning. But as the months and years flew by, brighter colors again prevailed and song and laughter were heard anew.

At an early age all the sisters attended the district school. Here, as everywhere, almost from the start, Ellen was the leader, guiding, directing, encouraging, ordering, so that the old Pine was not surprised to perceive that when still very young she had become the teacher.

As yet she had not ascended our mountain. But I had seen her often look up here, and I noticed that as she grew older she tramped more and more through the valleys, and explored further and further up the hills, so that I was not very much surprised one day to see her emerge from the bushes upon our rocks. But I was surprised when I saw how dazzlingly perfect was this child of the valley. She bounded to the highest point of rock and gazed at the wonderful panorama. For a long time she looked; then, descending, approached me.

"And who are you, great, big old tree, pray tell me?" she said.

"I am the old Pine," I answered, "that has watched over these valleys since long before you were born."

"And have they changed very much?" she asked.

"They have changed," I replied, "from a forest to the country you now see."

"Then there were no girls like me when you first knew them?"

"None," I answered.

"But there were a great many beautiful pines lifting their tops above other trees?"

"Yes," I answered; "and most of them are gone, and instead are the farms and villages."

"But the streams," she said, "flowed then as now; the clouds rose as lightly, and the storms beat as loudly, did they not, old Pine? The sun, too, shone by day, and the moon and all the innumerable stars by night, uttering their noiseless light, precisely as they do now?"

"Yes," I said.

"So that the principal difference is in the homes that abound where once was forest, and the people that occupy them?"

"Yes," I said; "and now will you not tell the old Pine what your name is, and where you come from?"

"My name is Ellen," she said, "and I come from yonder pretty valley. That house down there among the trees is my home."

"But," I said, "I have noticed three children playing about that house. Perhaps the other two are your sisters."

"Yes," she said, "they are my sisters."

"And what are their ages?" I asked.

"One of them is thirteen, the other eight."

"And what is your age?"

"I am sixteen," she answered. "Don't you think I am a pretty large girl for my age? Mother says I am, and the elm that lives above our house said I was the tallest girl in the valley. Do you know the elm that lives above our house, Mr. Pine?"

"Only by sight," I said.